R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR THE RETARDED.

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AMERICAN VOCATIONAL ASSN., WASHINGTON, D.C.

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A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED IS BEING CARRIED ON AT THE MADISON (WISCONSIN) VOCATIONAL, TECHNICAL, AND ADULT SCHOOLS. THE TRAINEES MUST BE 17 YEARS OR OLDER, WITH AN IQ OF APPROXIMATELY 50-75. THE SCHOOL OF QUANTITY FOOD PREPARATION CONTRIBUTES GREATLY TO THIS PROGRAM, FOR WHILE IT MAINLY TEACHES CHEFS AND BAKERS, IT CAN ALSO PROVIDE TRAINING IN DISH RACKING, BUS BOY SERVICE, DISHWASHING MACHINE OPERATION, EQUIPMENT CARE AND CLEANING, AND STOCKROOM DUTIES. BY PRACTICING IN THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA, THE STUDENTS LEARN IN A REAL BUT PROTECTED WORK ENVIRONMENT THAT HELPS THEM IN BOTH THEIR SOCIAL AND VOCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT. THIS TRAINING CAN BE APPLIED NOT ONLY IN THE FOOD AND RESTAURANT INDUSTRY, BUT ALSO IN HOSPITALS, LAUNDRIES, CANNERIES, AND THE LIKE. THE COURSE FURTHER INCLUDES INSTRUCTION IN SUCH PERSONAL NEEDS AS THE USE OF THE TELEPHONE AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, ATTENDING TO SOCIAL SECURITY AND INSURANCE REGULATIONS, USING LEISURE TIME AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, ETC. SEVERAL BUSINESSES IN THE COMMUNITY PROVIDE TRAINEESHIPS. BOTH THE JOB PLACEMENT RATE AND JOB STABILITY HAVE BEEN HIGH. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "AMERICAN VOCATIONAL JOURNAL," VOLUME 41, NUMBER 5, MAY 1966. (HH)

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ERIC

Accepted, encouraged and protected,
slow learners find their way to useful lives
in the work-adjustment program of the
Madison Vocational, Technical and Adult School

THE PHILOSOPHY of the Madison Vocational, Technical and Adult Schools rests on the belief that vocational education has a responsibility to meet the needs of the entire community, and hence to provide educational and vocational programs for as many citizens as possible. Programming is therefore designed to serve persons with a broad range of academic ability and skill potential. It is this philosophy that has made it possible for us to establish a program for retarded adolescents.

Some vocational educators have shied away from this philosophy because they fear that an unfavorable reflection will be cast upon their school if it offers programs for the retarded.

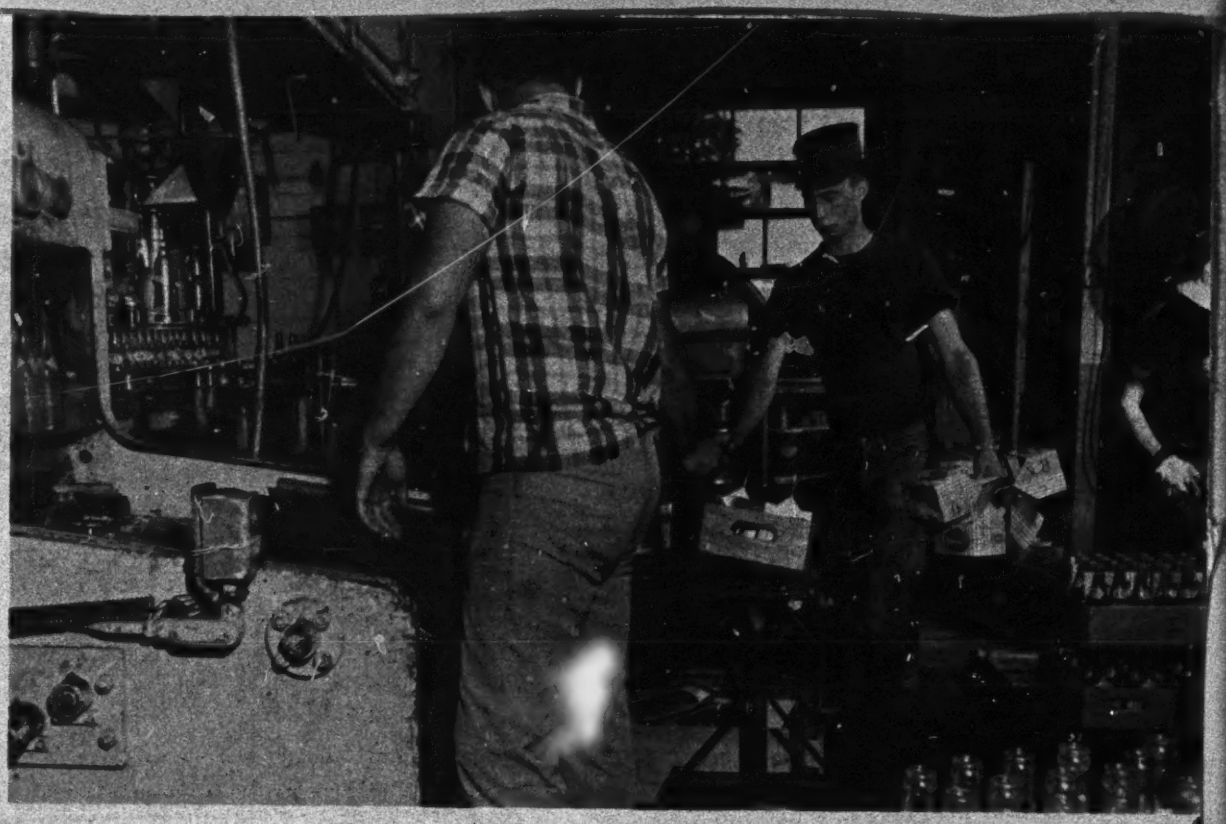
Community Service Concept. In the community college concept of education, on the other hand, one of the fundamental purposes is to provide community service programs. Moreover, our most reputable universities and colleges are continually expanding their special education and behavioral study departments to train professional workers more effectively and to engage in related research.

As recently as February 1965, the American Association of School Administrators adopted a resolution which emphasized vocational and educational opportunities for all youth. Hopefully, this resolution will result in a genuine effort at the local level to expand programs for the older retardate.

VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR THE RETARDED

In: American Vocational Journal, 41(5)/23-26, May, 1966.

CARL R. BRICE, Teacher-Coordinator
Work-Adjustment Program, Madison
Vocational, Technical and Adult Schools



Ron has been successful at a wide variety of duties in a local bottling plant. Shown here moving cases, Ron earns $1.25 per hour.

The foundation of a successful program for the mentally retarded is in the school administration. In the Madison Vocational, Technical and Adult system, the first person to recognize the importance of this program is the director. He sets the pace and projects the image. His acceptance of the retarded as part of the student body eliminates any rejection on the part of other staff members.

Possible Training Areas. A consideration that must precede the establishment of any program for retarded students is, "What are we equipped to do." There are many areas in which training might be centered, such as, home economics, agriculture and the various shops, and possibly the maintenance or janitorial department.

At Madison, we have relied heavily on the School of Quantity Food Preparation. This department's main responsibility is to train chefs and bakers but it also serves as training ground for retarded students. Jobs assigned to these students include the racking of dishes, bus boy training, dishwashing machine operation, care and cleaning of equipment, and stockroom work.

For further work experience, training and evaluation, retarded students are assigned to the school cafeteria. They are thus put in a realistic—yet protective—work environment. Contact with customers in this atmosphere helps them build the confidence and skills they need for social and vocational adjustment.

The many excellent placements made as a result of this training are not however restricted to restaurants or the food industry. Students have obtained employment in hospitals, laundries, canning factories, dry cleaning establishments, and domestic service.

Acquiring Staff. To acquire competent personnel, the next logical step in organizing a program for slow learners, is not as complex as it may seem. Vocational schools are pioneers in making use of talented people in the community who can be hired according to need. Many of these persons, besides being skilled in their own occupational areas, have that sense of human worth which is so essential to the teaching of retarded students.

In our program, for instance, we have the services of a janitor in one of the city's civic buildings. He teaches janitorial methods, but because of his understanding of human nature, has contributed to the total development of many retarded students.

In our school, a teacher-coordinator is responsible for the work adjustment program. Another teacher-coordinator, assigned to the School of Quantity Food Preparation, works half time with the program for the retarded. We rely on the half-time instructor to contribute the skills and knowledge necessary to the program's success—an excellent example of how a school can draw on resources available in its own departments.

Outside Resources. Schools interested in starting programs for retardates should be aware of the many agencies that can be called on for cooperative assistance and planning. Among them are the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, sheltered workshop, public school, family service, industrial commission, welfare department, and day care service.

In our program we utilize many work experiences available as training opportunities in the community sheltered workshop. The workshop offers an industrial setting in which general training experiences become meaningful. Students learn to use a time clock, become acquainted with safety measures and are made aware of the worker's responsibility to his employer. They are able also to develop a vocabulary related to employment and to improve their personal relationships.

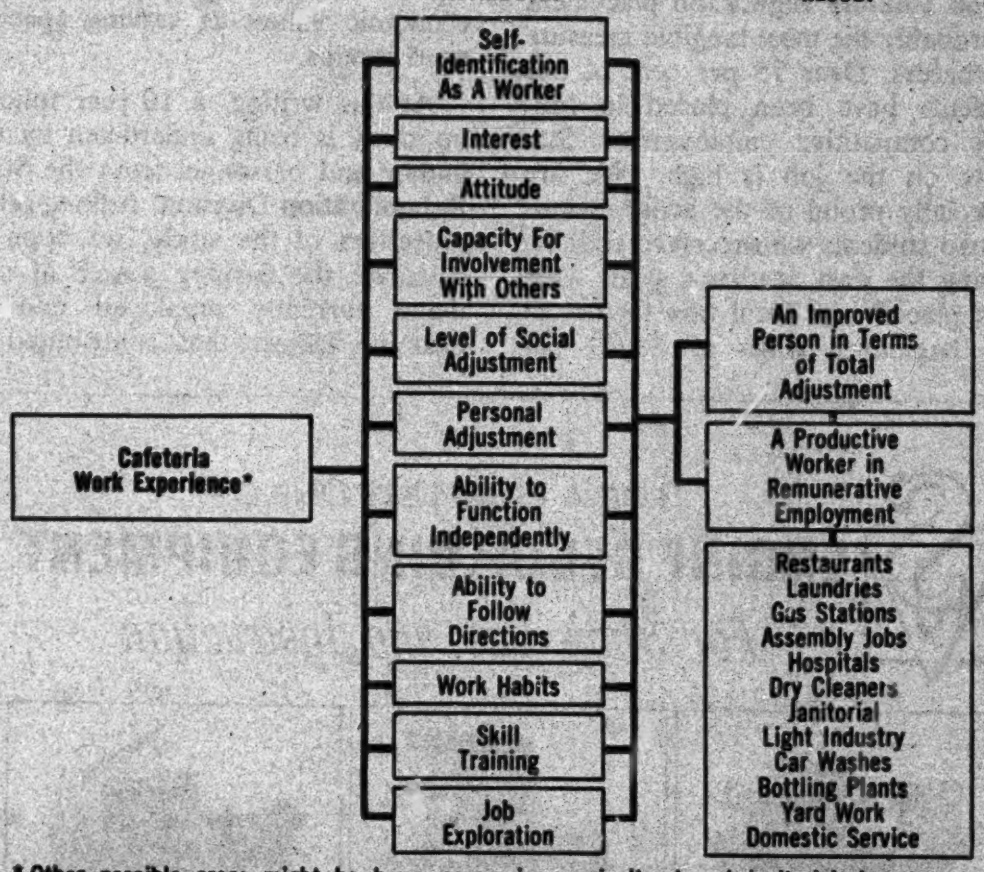
We have also developed traineeships in business and industries that operate within the community. We work with a hospital, a floral shop, and several dry cleaners and light industries. Another possibility (for schools that do not operate their own cafeterias) is to organize traineeships in local restaurants.

Work Adjustment Training. What is work adjustment training and how does it relate to vocational education? Basically, it involves vocational, personal and social factors. In the case of retarded students, it means emphasis on personal and social adjustment, areas in which these students are often most deficient. We have found that sound vocational planning can help to strengthen these weak

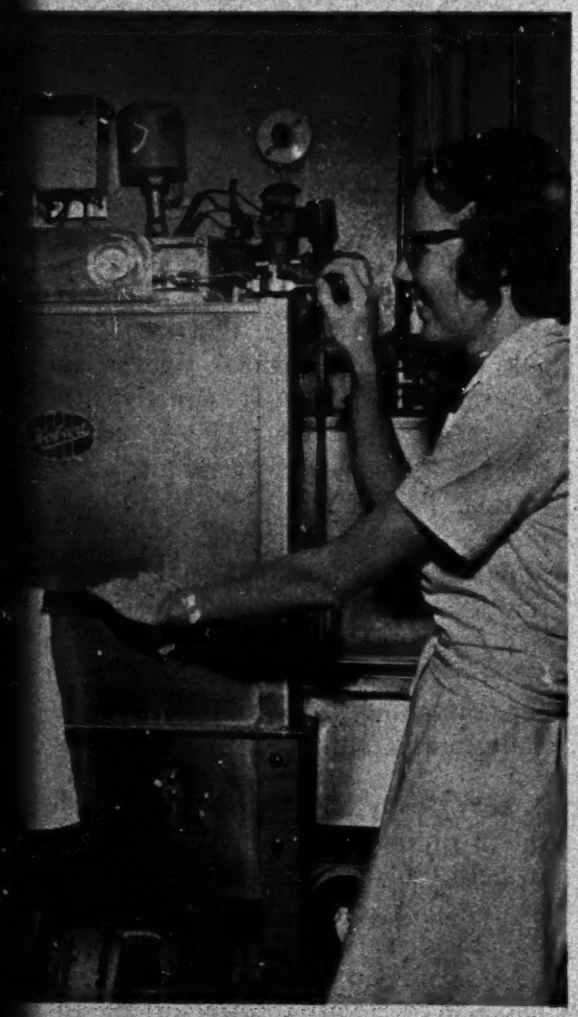
areas. Our vocational training is therefore designed not only to develop marketable skills but to provide personal and social adjustment as well. To accomplish these objectives, we have not found it necessary to think in terms of elaborate machines, facilities and technical manuals.

Diagram A shows how a given occupational area can contribute toward the total development of a retarded student. It points out that any given task can be used to strengthen various areas of vocational deficiency. It is, of course, based on the premise that total development is a legitimate function of vocational education.

DIAGRAM A: HOW A GIVEN OCCUPATIONAL AREA CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE TOTAL DEVELOPMENT OF A RETARDED STUDENT



* Other possible areas might be home economics, agricultural and janitorial departments as well as various shops. Occupational and training areas are examined to see not only how well the student can meet the demands of the job, but also how well the job can meet the needs of the student.



Shown above operating a dish-washing machine is Janet, a kitchen helper in a restaurant. She was placed by the school one and one-half years ago and currently earns $1.15 per hour.

Students eligible for our program are those, 17 years of age or over, who are diagnosed as mentally retarded (approximate IQ, 50-75). Eligibility is determined by the Rehabilitation Division of the Wisconsin State Board of Vocational and Adult Education.

Students are selected after an evaluation of their physical and mental capacity. In addition, the student must appear to have the potential for remunerative employment. Approximately 20 to 24 students are served in one academic year. The areas of service consist of evaluation, training, counseling, placement, and follow-up. The program is federally aided through the State Board of Vocational and Adult Education. Since its start in 1956, it has established a close liaison with the Madison Area Retardation Council and has had the continued support of that body.

Work Uppermost. The program is work oriented with a primary objective of job placement in remunerative employment. To meet the needs of each individual, we move students about from one phase of training to another.

Work offers the most logical approach to evaluating our students, but equally important, work can offer the direct learning experiences that retarded students so desperately need. To emphasize the importance of work is not however to minimize the benefit of practical academics. In our program, related instruction is given to all work adjustment students. In every case, we attempt to connect the instructional material with either the job or the personal needs of the student.

Areas of instruction include arithmetic, current events, and occupational information. Specific subjects that can be developed as discussion units are (a) application for social security number, (b) applying for a job, (c) insurance, (d) using want ads, (e) using the telephone and telephone book, (f) worker responsibility, (g) recreational opportunities, (h) use of public transportation, (i) self-improvement, and (j) planning the use of leisure time.

We do not assume that this instruction must be offered in a formal

classroom setting. In fact, we prefer not to have our students set apart by the "special education" label.

Job Stability High. Job placement is probably the most tangible measure of success. Over 75 per cent of our students have been placed in full-time competitive employment. Stability on the job is high. We are especially proud of the achievements of two students who received training during the past academic year. One was placed in a local box factory at the beginning wage of $1.90 per hour; another, placed as a mail handler, began at $2.38. The fact that no student started at less than the minimum wage points up the economic values of serving special-need groups.

At this writing, a 10-year follow-up study is being undertaken by the author and personnel from the State Rehabilitation Division. Among other objectives of the study, we hope to calculate the earning power of students currently employed and to examine factors that contributed to their vocational, personal and social development.

Tested Techniques. The basic techniques that have proved successful in developing our program can be summarized briefly as (a) using the talents of persons within the community—on a part-time basis if necessary, (b) utilizing all appropriate training opportunities within the school, (c) encouraging the participation of teachers who are willing and able to make a contribution, (d) developing on-the-job training opportunities within the community, (e) surveying the community for all potential job placements,* (f) organizing academics as direct learning experiences, and (g) maintaining a flexible program which will serve not only the individuals for which it is intended but also the community as a whole.

The above should be regarded as a broad framework only; other communities will have specific ideas on how to meet local needs. In any case, there is evidence now that major attempts to meet special needs can be undertaken as a function of vocational education. This is not to suggest that such programs must infringe upon highly skilled and technical areas. The demands of business and industry are high and opportunities for those with marginal abilities are on the decline. However, a general feeling ought to emerge that the community is responsible for educating and training all of its citizens.

Less Costly in Long Run. The basic intent of our program at Madison is to help the retarded student as much as possible in his effort to function like a normal person. It is perhaps best expressed in this statement by Norman P. Mitby, director of the Madison Vocational, Technical and Adult Schools: "It is my belief that we should be as concerned with the needs of the mentally retarded as we are with any other students in our school. Providing a vocational education experience leading to job placement, even if it is costly, can be better thought of as an investment in their future. It is done at a price far less costly to the public than if we ignore their training needs."

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* A useful reference is the **Guide to Jobs for the Mentally Retarded** (Jones and Peterson, 1964), American Institute for Research, Pittsburgh, Pa.

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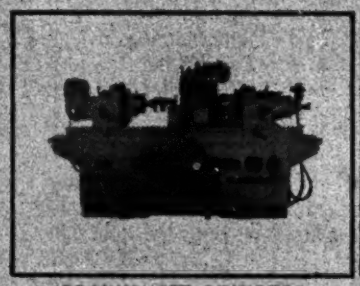
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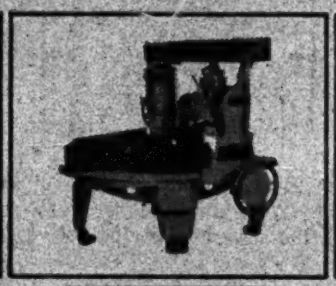
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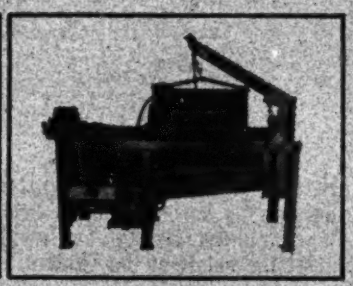
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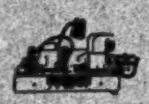
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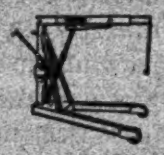
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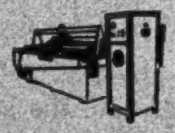
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COVER

Don't look to the halls of Congress fo... the big education stories in 1966-67, said a Washington reporter last month. The big stories will be in the districts. ...

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